

R 261525Z FEB 85
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0407
INFO AMCONSUL ADANA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 07 DAMASCUS 01314

E.O.12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: [KPRP](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

REF: DAMASCUS 575

11. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

-
12. SUMMARY: THE ONLY POPULAR MOVEMENT EVER TO HAVE MOUNTED A SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO ASAD'S REGIME--THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD--HAS NOT RECOVERED FROM ITS INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND THE DEVASTATING BLOW SUFFERED AT HAMA. THE JANUARY 25 "PARDON" ANNOUNCED FOR CERTAIN MUSLIM BROTHER EXILES IS FAR LESS THAN A GENERAL AMNESTY; PROBABLY FEW MUSLIM BROTHERS WERE INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATING IT AND FEW WILL BENEFIT FROM IT. THE "PARDON" WAS USEFUL TO ASAD IN BOLSTERING HIS IMAGE OF "BENEVOLENCE" IN THE PERIOD LEADING UP TO THE FEBRUARY 10 REFERENDUM. IT TESTIFIES TO THE CONTINUED WEAK STATE OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS. END SUMMARY.

SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS: DEFEATED, DIVIDED, & DISCREDITED

13. SINCE THE MASSIVE ARRESTS THAT BEGAN IN DECEMBER 1981 AND THE DEMOLITION OF HAMA IN FEBRUARY 1982, THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD HAS BEEN TAME. IN THE INTERIM, ASAD'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS HAVE DERIVED FROM AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT AREA--HIS OWN LAPSE OF HEALTH AND HIS BROTHER RIF'AT'S GRAB FOR POWER. HAMA IS USUALLY VIEWED AS THE WHOLE EXPLANATION FOR THE MUSLIM BROTHERS' FALL, BUT THE EXPLANATION IS MORE COMPLEX.

-
14. LONG BEFORE HAMA, IN THE SEVENTIES, THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD SPLIT INTO AT LEAST THREE "TENDENCIES." THERE WAS, AND STILL IS, A GROUP CENTERED AT AACHEN IN WEST GERMANY, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF 'ISAM AL-'ATTAR, WHO WAS EXILED FROM SYRIA IN 1964. AS EARLY AS 1970 MUSLIM BROTHERS IN SYRIA DECIDED THAT THEY NEEDED A LEADER CLOSER TO HOME, AND 'ATTAR HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY IRRELEVANT. AT PRESENT, ACCORDING TO OUR GERMAN COLLEAGUES, 'ATTAR IS OLD AND AILING, HE IS STILL IN AACHEN, AND HE HAS BECOME ONLY A RELIGIOUS "THINKER." HE SEEMS NO LONGER TO HAVE MUCH OF A FOLLOWING.

-
15. LEADERSHIP OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS CAME TO BE DIVIDED INTO POLITICAL AND MILITARY "TENDENCIES." THE POLITICAL TENDENCY WAS, AND STILL IS, LED BY A GROUP OF OLDER MEN (BORN IN THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES) SUCH AS 'ADNAN SA'D AL-DIN, SA'ID HAWWA, AND THE AL-BAYANUNI BROTHERS. THESE MEN MAY BE IN BAGHDAD OR THEY MAY MOVE BETWEEN BAGHDAD AND AMMAN. THE "POLITICAL" GROUP FALLS INTO THE TRADITIONAL MOLD OF THE FOUNDER OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, THE EGYPTIAN HASAN AL-BANNA: MEN WHO ARE "FUNDAMENTALIST" IN WISHING TO CREATE A

STATE BUILT ON THE KORAN BUT WHO CAN ACCEPT CERTAIN WESTERN HUMANISTIC AND PARLIAMENTARY IDEAS. IN THE EARLY SEVENTIES, THESE MEN EMBRACED THE IDEA OF MILITARY OPERATIONS ("JIHAD"), IN OPPOSITION TO THE LESS MILITARISTIC ORIENTATION OF 'ISAM AL-'ATTAR, BUT THEY WERE SUBSEQUENTLY UPSTAGED BY THE FAR MORE ACTIVE MILITARISM OF THE "MILITARY TENDENCY" THAT DEVELOPED IN THE MID-SEVENTIES. (IRONICALLY, 'ATTAR IS TODAY MORE IDEOLOGICALLY ALLIED WITH THE MILITARY TENDENCY THAN THE POLITICAL TENDENCY.)

16. THE "MILITARY TENDENCY" FROM THE BEGINNING HAS BEEN LED BY A MUCH YOUNGER GROUP OF MEN. SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN THE MID-SEVENTIES, IT HAS BEEN KNOWN AS AL-TALI'A AL-MUQATILA LIL-MUJAHIDIN (THE FIGHTING VANGUARD OF WARRIORS). IT HAS BEEN WILLING TO RESORT TO ANY FORM OF TERROR (E.G., BLOWING UP THE CADETS' ARTILLERY SCHOOL IN ALEPPO IN 1980, WITH OVER FIFTY KILLED). ITS LEADERS HAVE REJECTED WESTERN IDEAS, ANY FORM OF COMPROMISE WITH SECULAR MOVEMENTS, AND ANY MERCY FOR ALAWIS. IN THEIR FANATICISM, THEY FORM A SUNNI ANALOGUE TO THE KHOMEINISTS. THIS GROUP'S EARLY LEADERS WERE ONE BY ONE KILLED BY ASAD'S SECURITY FORCES WHEN ASAD BEGAN TO STEP UP HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MUSLIM BROTHERS IN 1979-80. THE LEADER--OR "CALIPH," AS HE WAS CALLED BY HIS ADHERENTS--WHO SUCCEEDED THEM WAS 'ADNAN 'UQLA (BORN 1950).

17. FOR A TIME, BEGINNING WITH THE FORMATION OF AN "ISLAMIC FRONT" AND THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE "MANIFESTO OF THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION OF SYRIA" IN NOVEMBER 1980 (SIGNED BY 'ADNAN SA'D AL-DIN, SA'ID HAWWA, AND 'ALI AL-BAYANUNI--THE LAST NAMED AS THE ISLAMIC FRONT'S "SECRETARY GENERAL"), THERE WAS GREATER COOPERATION WITHIN THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD. 'ISAM AL-'ATTAR JOINED THE FRONT, AND 'UQLA AND THE "POLITICAL TENDENCY" HELD NEGOTIATIONS TO TRY TO PATCH UP THEIR DIFFERENCES. IT APPEARS THAT THEY MAY EVEN HAVE COORDINATED TO TRY TO EFFECT A COUP AGAINST ASAD, WHICH THEY FORESAW WOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY MASS UPRISINGS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. (THEY ALSO HOPED FOR EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE--FROM IRAQ, IN PARTICULAR.) THE MUSLIM BROTHERS APPARENTLY HAD SYMPATHIZERS IN MANY QUARTERS OF THE REGIME, INCLUDING IN HIGH PLACES IN THE ARMED FORCES. PRESS REPORTING OF THE PERIOD SUGGESTS THAT COORDINATION AND PLANNING WERE, HOWEVER, LACKING. ASAD'S SECURITY FORCES GOT WIND OF THE PLOTTING AND BEGAN A MAJOR ARREST CAMPAIGN BY THE END OF 1981. FOUR HUNDRED OFFICERS WERE REPORTEDLY ARRESTED IN JANUARY, 1982. BY THE TIME ASAD'S MEN LOCATED THE MUSLIM BROTHERS' HEADQUARTERS IN HAMA, ON FEBRUARY 2, 1982, ASAD'S MEN HAD PROBABLY ALREADY BROKEN THE BACK OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERS' INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN THE REGIME. THE MUSLIM BROTHERS IN HAMA, FORCED TO MAKE A STAND OR FACE ARREST AND EXECUTION, OVERWHELMED THE ARMED FORCE THAT ASAD ORIGINALLY SENT IN TO HAMA, AND A SIEGE OF SEVERAL WEEKS ENSUED, RESULTING IN THOUSANDS OF DEATHS. (A TALI'A SOURCE IN SEPTEMBER 1982 CLAIMED THAT 6,000 OF ASAD'S FORCES, 400 "MUJAHIDIN," AND 15,000 CIVILIANS WERE KILLED. MORE RECENTLY, SYRIANS ARE WONT TO CITE VERY MUCH HIGHER FIGURES.)

18. TALI'A AND THE "POLITICAL TENDENCY" HAD ALREADY BROKEN OFF THEIR NEGOTIATIONS IN DECEMBER 1981, AT THE TIME WHEN THE MAJOR ARRESTS HAD BEGUN, TWO MONTHS BEFORE HAMA. HAMA ITSELF, THEREFORE, WAS NOT THE CAUSE OF THE FINAL RUPTURE, ALTHOUGH THERE IS STRONG FEELING AMONG THE "POLITICAL TENDENCY" THAT THE TALI'A BOTCHED THE JOB IN HAMA. THE RUPTURE BECAME OFFICIAL WHEN THE "POLITICAL TENDENCY" JOINED THE NEWLY CONSTITUTED "NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR THE LIBERATION OF SYRIA" IN MARCH 1982, WITH NINETEEN OTHER OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS OR INDIVIDUALS, MOST OF THEM SECULAR AND CENTERED IN IRAQ. SA'D AL-DIN REPRESENTS THE ISLAMIC FRONT IN THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE, WHICH INCLUDES THE PRO-IRAQI WING OF THE SYRIAN BA'TH PARTY (MICHEL 'AFLAQ), THE ARAB SOCIALIST MOVEMENT (LED BY 'AFLAQ'S ERSTWHILE ALLY AKRAM AL-HAWRANI), NASSERISTS, AND INDIVIDUALS SUCH AS

FORMER SYRIAN DICTATOR AMIN AL-HAFIZ.

19. THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE SIGNALLED HOW FAR THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD HAD FALLEN. NOT ONLY HAD IT LOST MUCH OF ITS INFRASTRUCTURE PLANTED IN THE REGIME AND MUCH OF ITS FIGHTING FORCE, IT HAD BECOME IRRECONCILABLY SPLIT AND THE POLITICAL WING HAD SULLIED ITSELF BY ASSOCIATING WITH GROUPS ALIEN TO THE IDEA OF AN ISLAMIC STATE AND BY PUTTING ITSELF SQUARELY INTO THE GRIP OF THE IRAQI REGIME. IT IS LITTLE WONDER THAT IN THE PERIOD AFTER THOSE DEVASTATING MONTHS, DECEMBER 1981 TO MARCH 1982, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE OR NO TERRORIST ACTIVITY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN SYRIA, AND INDEED, LITTLE APPARENT POLITICAL ACTIVITY. (THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON IN JUNE 1982 WAS ALSO A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR, SINCE THAT INVASION HAD THE EFFECT OF BINDING THE SYRIAN POPULACE AGAINST THE PERCEIVED ENEMY, AND MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD ACTIVITY--EVEN LEAVING ASIDE THE DISCREDITING TRAUMA OF HAMA--WOULD HAVE FOUND LESS POPULAR SYMPATHY THAN NORMALLY.)

110. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD HAS EVER RECEIVED EXTENSIVE EXTERNAL SUPPORT. WITH ITS INTERNAL STRUCTURE DISRUPTED AND ITS NAME BLACKENED AMONG ITS OWN PURISTS AND AMONG THE SYRIAN POPULACE AT LARGE, IT PRESUMABLY HAS HAD TO LOOK EVEN MORE ACTIVELY FOR EXTERNAL SUPPORT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTRAINTS THAT CAUSE US TO BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE NOT HAD GREAT SUCCESS:

--SECULAR, BA'THI IRAQ WELCOMED AT LEAST SOME OF THE LEADERS OF THE POLITICAL TENDENCY "WITH OPEN ARMS." BUT IT CLOSED THE DOOR TO THE TALIA. ('UQLA COULD NOT FIND REFUGE THERE. ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS HE WAS ARRESTED WHEN TRYING TO SNEAK BACK INTO SYRIA EITHER IN 1983 OR 1984; HE HAS NOT BEEN HEARD FROM RECENTLY.) A JORDANIAN COLLEAGUE SAYS THAT IRAQ "MAY BE" TRAINING THE MUSLIM BROTHERS NOW, BUT ON A LIMITED BASIS. THE IRAQI REGIME APPARENTLY WILL NOT COUNTENANCE ANY OPERATIONS NOT TOTALLY UNDER ITS CONTROL.

--JORDAN MAINTAINS AN INTELLIGENCE LINK TO THE BROTHERHOOD AND REPORTEDLY ALLOWS ALL FACTIONS OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, BUT IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY NERVOUS ABOUT ANY OPERATION AGAINST SYRIA, WHICH WAS SEEN TO BE PLANNED OR TAKE PLACE FROM JORDAN. IT APPARENTLY GIVES LITTLE ACTIVE ASSISTANCE, AND IT IS SUSPICIOUS OF ALL MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD ACTIVITY.

--ARAFAT'S PLO HAS A LONG HISTORY OF COOPERATION WITH THE MUSLIM BROTHERS (ONE OF MANY REASONS FOR ASAD'S ANTIPATHY), BUT ARAFAT'S ABILITY TO BE HELPFUL IS PROBABLY NOT VERY GREAT. ARAFAT AND OTHER FOUNDERS OF FATAH WERE THEMSELVES MUSLIM BROTHERS, AND FEDAYEEN AND MUSLIM BROTHERS TRAINED TOGETHER IN JORDAN BEFORE THE 1970 CIVIL WAR. MORE RECENTLY, ARAFAT AND SHAYKH SHA'BAN, TAWHID LEADER IN TRIPOLI, LEBANON, WERE CLOSE ALLIES UNTIL ARAFAT WAS DRIVEN OUT IN DECEMBER 1983. (SHA'BAN, WE BELIEVE, IS A MUSLIM BROTHER, AND SOME OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS WHO FLED AFTER HAMA TOOK REFUGE IN TRIPOLI AND FORM A PART OF THE TAWHID.) ARAFAT'S DIRECT ASSISTANCE--AT LEAST IN THE FORM OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT IN ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING--WAS PROBABLY DISRUPTED BY HIS OUSTER FROM TRIPOLI AND WE ARE UNCERTAIN AS TO THE DEGREE OF CONTINUING COOPERATION.

--IRAN IS ANATHEMA TO THE POLITICAL TENDENCY, BOTH BECAUSE OF ITS SUPPORT FOR THE ASAD/ALAWI REGIME AND BECAUSE OF THE POLITICAL TENDENCY'S ASSOCIATION WITH IRAQ. IRAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH TALIA IS MORE NUANCED. TALIA REVILES IRAN FOR ITS SUPPORT FOR ASAD, BUT THERE IS A COMMON FANATICISM AND THERE MAY BE A REALIZATION WITH THE TALIA THAT IRAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ASAD IS PURELY TACTICAL AND THEREFORE THAT IRAN IS NOT "BEYOND REDEMPTION."

--SAUDI ARABIA IS SIMILARLY REVILED FOR ITS ENORMOUS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE ASAD REGIME, BUT WE HEAR

PERSISTENT RUMORS THAT RIYADH HAS ALSO PROVIDED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND REFUGE TO CERTAIN OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERS. SAUDI DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS HERE STOUTLY DENY ANY ASSOCIATION WITH ANY SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS, AVERRING THAT THEY WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO GAIN AND MUCH TO LOSE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY MUSLIM BROTHERS IN MECCA, WHOSE PRESENCE IS TOLERATED BECAUSE OF THEIR RELIGIOUS UNDERPINNINGS AND TIES TO THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT.

THE "PARDON": PUBLICITY PLOY AND SIGN OF BROTHERHOOD WEAKNESS

¶11. INTO THE APPARENT THREE-YEAR VOID IN MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD ACTIVITY, ASAD HAS NOW INJECTED HIS LIMITED PARDON OF JANUARY 25. SOME SYRIANS AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES HAVE EXPRESSED SURPRISE TO US THAT ASAD DID NOT MAKE SOME "GRAND GESTURE" SOME MONTHS AGO, BEGINNING AT THE TIME OF HIS RECOVERY IN HEALTH AND RIF'AT'S EXILE. HOWEVER, ASAD PROBABLY NEEDED ALL OF 1984 TO BUILD BACK FROM THE CRISIS BROUGHT ON BY HIS HEART ATTACK, AS SHOWN BY HIS CONTINUAL DEFERRAL OF THE EIGHTH REGIONAL CONGRESS.

-

¶12. THE "PARDON" IS FAR FROM A GENERAL AMNESTY:

--IT DECLARES: "CONTACTS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN HELD BETWEEN US AND THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD VANGUARD ORGANIZATION (TANZIM AL'TALI'A) LEADERSHIP ABROAD." THE NAME, "TANZIM AL'TALI'A," IS NOT THE SAME AS "AL-TALI'A AL-MUQATILA LIL -MUJAHIDIN," THE OFFICIAL NAME THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN EMPLOYED BY THE "MILITARY TENDENCY."

--"ABROAD" IMPLIES THAT THE AMNESTY IS INTENDED ONLY FOR EXILES, NOT FOR MUSLIM BROTHERS IN PRISON IN SYRIA. (A TALI'A SPOKESMAN IN 1982 CLAIMED THAT THERE WERE 10,000 MUSLIM BROTHERS IN JAIL IN SYRIA. ALL OF OUR INTERLOCUTORS ON THE SUBJECT ASSERT THAT THERE ARE "THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS" OF SYRIANS IN JAIL, ACCUSED OF BEING OR ASSOCIATING WITH MUSLIM BROTHERS, DATING FROM THE LATE SEVENTIES BUT ESPECIALLY FROM THE HAMA PERIOD. INDEED, IT IS COMMON TO MEET SYRIANS WHO HAVE SOME FAMILY MEMBER, OR WHO KNOW OTHERS WHO HAVE SOME FAMILY MEMBER, IN JAIL UNDER ACCUSATIONS RELATING TO THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD. 10,000 SEEMS A FAIR ESTIMATE-- AND A VERY LARGE NUMBER FOR A SMALL COUNTRY.)

--IT DECLARES THAT "THIS LEADERSHIP" HAS EXPRESSED "NEW CONVICTIONS" RECOGNIZING THE PERFDY OF THE "PLOT CONCOCTED AGAINST SYRIA" BY "THOSE TRADING IN THE NAME OF RELIGION." THIS FORMULATION SUGGESTS THAT MUSLIM FANATICS--IF INDEED THE TALI'A--HAD A CHANGE OF HEART, INCLUDING A RECOGNITION THAT THEIR PREVIOUS ACTS AGAINST THE ASAD REGIME IN THE NAME OF ISLAM WERE ACTUALLY CONTRARY TO ISLAM.

--IT DECLARES THAT "THIS LEADERSHIP" HAS EXPRESSED, IN ITS NAME AND "THE NAME OF MANY OF THE BROTHERHOOD BASES," THE DESIRE TO "RETURN TO THE HOMELAND" AND THAT "THIS PARDON WILL BE APPLICABLE TO EVERYONE WHO RETURNS TO HIS HOMELAND WITH AN OPEN HEART." IT SUGGESTS, THUS, THAT THE PARDON--WHILE ONLY ADDRESSED TO EXILES--IS SOMEHOW ADDRESSED NOT TO ONE GROUP ONLY, BUT TO ALL BROTHERHOOD "BASES" AND "EVERYONE" WHO SOMEHOW "PROVES" HIS ALLEGIANCE AND CHANGE OF HEART.

--FINALLY, IT DECLARES THAT "SOME OF THESE CITIZENS HAVE ALREADY RETURNED" UNDER A "SPECIAL PARDON FROM HAFIZ AL-ASAD."

¶13. ON THE VERY SAME DAY AS THIS "PARDON," THE FINAL DECLARATION OF THE EIGHTH REGIONAL CONGRESS WAS ISSUED, CARRYING AN ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT MESSAGE. DURING THE CONGRESS, WE HAD HEARD THAT TWO "SECRET" SESSIONS DEALT WITH THE ISSUE OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD, AND

THESE REPORTS WERE BORNE OUT IN THE FINAL DECLARATION.

--"DURING ITS STUDY OF THE DOMESTIC SITUATION, THE CONGRESS DISCUSSED THE PLOT OF THE AGENT MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD GANG, WHICH HAS SOUGHT TO IMPLEMENT THE PLANS OF IMPERIALISM AND SOME OF ITS TOOLS IN THE REGION THROUGH BASES OF SUPPORT, SUPPLIES, TRAINING, AND HELP FROM JORDAN AND IRAQ. THE CONGRESS ALSO REVIEWED THE MEASURES TAKEN TO LIQUIDATE THAT AGENT GANG AND TO PURSUE ITS ELEMENTS...IT PRAISED THE MEASURES EXERTED...TO LIQUIDATE THIS GANG AND TO FOIL THE IMPERIALIST-ZIONIST SCHEMES IT WAS IMPLEMENTING."

-
THERE IS NOT A WORD OF LENIENCY IN THIS FORMULATION. IN EFFECT, IT IS A STATEMENT THAT IMPLIES THAT HAMA WAS NECESSARY, THE REGIME IS NOT SORRY ABOUT IT, AND IT WILL DO IT AGAIN IF NECESSARY.

¶14. THUS THIS "PARDON" IS HIGHLY SUSPECT ON SEVERAL COUNTS:

--IT DOES NOT ADDRESS THE THOUSANDS OF MUSLIM BROTHERS WHO ARE IN PRISON. IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE VERY MANY MUSLIM BROTHER EXILES BEING LURED BACK TO SYRIA WITHOUT A DEMONSTRATION THAT OTHERS, NOT SO FORTUNATE TO HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FLEE, WOULD NOT ALSO BE FORGIVEN. IN FACT, THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW REPORTS THAT SOME OF THOSE IN PRISON--A "SMALL NUMBER," OR "MORE THAN A HUNDRED," OR "FIVE HUNDRED"--HAVE BEEN RELEASED (ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT, MOST OF THESE WERE WOMEN). ON THE OTHER HAND, MOST OF OUR CONTACTS KNOW OF NO PROGRESS WHATSOEVER ON RELEASE OF MUSLIM BROTHERS, AND THEIR INQUIRIES INTO THE FATE OF RELATIVES CONTINUE TO MEET THE SAME DEADLY SILENCE AS HAS PREVAILED FOR THREE YEARS. BY THE MOST OPTIMISTIC ACCOUNT, THERE SCARCELY SEEMS TO BE THE KIND OF DEMONSTRATION OF "GOOD INTENTIONS" THAT MUSLIM BROTHERS WITH A HEALTHY INSTINCT FOR SELF-PRESERVATION WOULD REQUIRE BEFORE CONTEMPLATING A RETURN TO SYRIA. (THE REGIME WOULD HAVE A MAJOR PROBLEM IN GRANTING A GENERAL AMNESTY. MANY OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERS WHO WERE IMPRISONED HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY "DISAPPEARED"--ACCORDING TO ONE REPORT, SEVERAL WERE INTENTIONALLY "RELEASED" FROM PALMYRA PRISON AND THEN HUNTED DOWN AND KILLED--AND OTHERS TORTURED TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE "PRESENTABLE" TO THE PUBLIC.)

--THE "PARDON" IS EXTREMELY VAGUE ON HOW AN EXILE IS MEANT TO "PROVE" HIS SINCERITY AND ALLEGIANCE, ANOTHER FACTOR THAT WOULD DISSUADE "HOMESICK" EXILES.

--IT TALKS ABOUT THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD VANGUARD ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP ABROAD, RATHER THAN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FIGHTING VANGUARD OF THE WARRIORS. "VANGUARD" (TALI'A) IS A COMMONLY USED CATCHWORD IN SYRIAN POLITICAL PARLANCE. THE SYRIANS THUS MAY NOT BE REFERRING TO THE SAME GROUP; THEY MAY EVEN BE INTENTIONALLY USING PART OF THE NAME IN AN EFFORT TO DISCREDIT THE "MILITARY TENDENCY" FURTHER. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT IF 'ADNAN 'UQLA, THE TALI'A "CALIPH," IS IN FACT IN A SYRIAN PRISON, THE SYRIANS HAVE SPECIFICALLY EXCLUDED HIM IN THEIR FORMULATION.

--FINALLY, THE VERY NATURE OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS--AND ESPECIALLY THE WELL-KNOWN FANATICISM OF THE TALI'A--IS SUCH AS TO SUGGEST THAT VERY FEW OF THEIR MEMBERS, MUCH LESS THEIR LEADERS, WOULD ACCEPT THE HUMILIATION OF KOWTOWING TO HAFIZ AL-ASAD.

¶15. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE HAD A NUMBER OF REPORTS THAT SYRIAN SECURITY OFFICIALS DID CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF AN ORGANIZATION CALLING ITSELF "TALI'A"--MEANT TO BE THE TALI'A OF 'ADNAN 'UQLA--A PROCESS THAT SUPPOSEDLY BEGAN WITH THE INTERVENTION OF SA'ID SHA'BAN AND POSSIBLY THE IRANIANS. WE EVEN HAVE A REPORT THAT SOME "FEW HUNDRED" TALI'A MEMBERS HAVE RETURNED TO SYRIA FROM REFUGE IN SAUDI ARABIA, THANKS

TO THE INTERVENTION OF CROWN PRINCE 'ABDALLAH, WHEN HE WAS IN DAMASCUS JANUARY 21-FEBRUARY 1 (AND POSSIBLY ALSO DURING HIS SEPTEMBER 1984 VISIT), AND THAT TALIA MAY EVEN JOIN THE SYRIAN "NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE FRONT"*

16. IF THESE REPORTS HAVE ANY TRUTH TO THEM, THEY ARE THE STRONGEST INDICATION YET OF THE LOW STATE TO WHICH THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS HAVE FALLEN. IN SEPTEMBER 1982, AN UNNAMED SPOKESMAN FOR TALIA, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH LE MATIN, POINTED A FINGER AT THE "POLITICAL TENDENCY," DISDAINFULLY ACCUSING ITS LEADERS (SA'D AL-DIN ET AL) OF BEING ON THE VERGE OF JOINING A COALITION WITH ASAD. NOW IT MAY BE THAT TALIA ITSELF, OR SOME ELEMENTS IN IT, HAVE DONE JUST THAT.

17. GIVEN THE RELIABILITY OF THESE RECENT REPORTS, WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT A SMALL OR FRINGE ELEMENT OF THE TALIA, OR AN ELEMENT OF MUSLIM BROTHERS WHO HAVE ASSUMED THE NAME, HAS ENGAGED IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE SYRIANS. THE SHA'BAN CONNECTION IS PLAUSIBLE--INDEED, OUR SAUDI AND JORDANIAN DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS HERE, WITHOUT PROMPTING, INDICATED TO US THAT THERE WERE NUMEROUS "MEN FROM TRIPOLI" MILLING ABOUT IN DAMASCUS IN THE WEEKS BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE "PARDON," AND THEY BELIEVE "TRIPOLI" WAS WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT. A SWEDISH DIPLOMAT HERE, A LONG-TIME FOLLOWER OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS (APPARENTLY THERE ARE MANY OF THEM IN SWEDEN), INFORMS US ALSO THAT HE HAD HEARD, AT THE TIME OF SHA'BAN'S REMARKABLE VISIT TO DAMASCUS IN SEPTEMBER 1984, THAT SHA'BAN HAD RAISED THE ISSUE OF THE RETURN TO SYRIA OF SOME OF THE SYRIAN MUSLIM BROTHERS WHO HAD TAKEN REFUGE IN TRIPOLI. (THE SWEDE ALSO SAYS THAT SHA'BAN, A MORTAL ENEMY OF ASAD, ONLY AGREED TO COME TO DAMASCUS, AT IRANIAN PRESIDENT KHAMENEI'S URGING, WHEN KHAMENEI AGREED TO KEEP AN IRANIAN MINISTER IN TRIPOLI AND ASAD AGREED TO SEND A HIGH-RANKING SYRIAN OFFICIAL TO TRIPOLI AS GUARANTORS OF SHA'BAN'S SAFE RETURN.) SA'ID SHA'BAN MADE HIS SECOND VISIT TO SYRIA ON FEBRUARY 20, THOUGH WE HAVE NOT YET HEARD THAT THE LATTER VISIT HAD A MUSLIM BROTHERS CONNECTION.

18. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE "PARDON" FOR MUSLIM BROTHERS FORMED A PART OF THE PRE-REFERENDUM PUBLICITY BUILD-UP. IT IS CLEAR THAT ASAD WANTED TO GO INTO THE REFERENDUM WITH HIS "RELIGIOUS FLANK" AS WELL COVERED AS POSSIBLE. IN THE DAYS LEADING UP TO THE REFERENDUM ON FEBRUARY 10, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRESS WAS REplete WITH HEADLINES OF ACCLAIM FOR ASAD FROM EACH OF THE PRINCIPAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN SYRIA, INCLUDING EVEN A JOINT MUSLIM-CHRISTIAN DECLARATION. ASAD HAS ALWAYS BEEN CAREFUL TO APPEAR TO BE A DEVOUT MUSLIM--DESPITE BEING AN ALAWI AND THUS DESPISED BY DEVOUT MUSLIMS--AND HE HAS ALWAYS TROTTED OUT CHRISTIAN LEADERS AT TIMES WHEN IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DEMONSTRATE NATIONAL UNITY; BUT WE HAVE NEVER SEEN QUITE SO MUCH OF IT ALL AT ONCE.

19. BUT HIS NEED FOR THIS "PARDON" AT THIS TIME GOES DEEPER. HAMA CONTINUES AS A VERY PRESENT, VERY HORRIBLE NATIONAL MEMORY. NOTHING LIKE HAMA HAD EVER OCCURRED IN LIVING MEMORY. (JAMAL PASHA'S HUPPRESSION OF CHRISTIAN MINORITIES INVOLVED TURKISH BUTCHERY OF CHRISTIANS, MOSTLY ARMENIANS AND MARONITES--THUS THIS IS NOT A MEMORY OF SYRIANS BUTCHERING FELLOW SYRIANS.) WE BELIEVE THAT ASAD SOUGHT TO GO INTO HIS THIRD TERM "CLEANSED," WITH THE HORROR OF HAMA PUT BEHIND HIM. AT THE SAME TIME, THE MEMORY OF HAMA HAS ITS UTILITY, IN REMINDING THE PEOPLE THAT ASAD IS WILLING TO BE UNIMAGINABLY TOUGH WHEN HE HAS TO BE. THUS, HE GAVE DOUBLE, APPARENTLY CONTRADICTORY MESSAGES--THE "PARDON," AND THE EIGHTH CONGRESS FINAL DECLARATION ON THE SAME DAY STRESSING CONTINUED TOUGHNESS. INDEED, THE "PARDON" IS ALSO QUITE TOUGH IN ITS CONDEMNATION OF THOSE "TRADING IN THE NAME OF RELIGION" AND "DISTORTING THE NOBLE RELIGION." ASAD SEEKS TO GIVE AN IMAGE OF BEING "BENEVOLENT,"

"TOUGH," AND THE "UPHOLDER OF RELIGION" (THOUGH ALAWI)
ALL AT THE SAME TIME.

-

¶20. NOTE: POST WOULD WELCOME CRITICISMS AND
CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS STUDY FROM DEPARTMENT, CIA, AND
DIA, AND EMBASSIES BAGHDAD, AMMAN, AND RIYADH. OUR
OWN HISTORICAL SOURCES ARE EXTREMELY LIMITED.

¶21. BEIRUT MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. EAGLETON